addition, there were in the city furloughed members of Company K and the Naval Reserves—men still in federal service for the Spanish-American War effort.[64]

Amidst heated rhetoric regarding the fear of black attempts to retaliate against white leaders, the men and women of Wilmington prepared for whatever violence transpired and all expected some sort of outbreak. A Richmond reporter noticed that "the whites, or some of them, would welcome a little 'unpleasantness'" since they were "prepared for it." The reporter provided a metaphor for the impending conflict as he stated that "it requires an electric storm to purify the atmosphere." [65] Many whites were on edge – the city had been worked into a fever over repeated reports, true and contrived, of violence against whites by blacks. Mrs. Edward Wootten, a Wilmington resident, wrote her son on November 8 that their block captain had told her husband that he should be ready on a moment's notice. She had her husband buy extra bread so that they would have something to eat if violence broke out. The "safe place" for her block was a nearby church, but she decided that if the Presbyterian church bell sounded the alarm, she would stay at her home because each block was guarded by groups of 4 to 8 men at each corner. She lamented that she had no gun because they were all in the hands of her male family members but did note that the "hatchets were handy." She prepared coffee for the men guarding her block and assured them that more would be made if "trouble came." She did not believe "the negroes will dare start so terrible a thing but if they are drinking they may do more than if sober and it would take a small match to set all on fire." Considering herself a strong woman, she felt "truly sorry for timid women and the little children." Her letter ended the next morning with a short statement from her husband: "All quiet—we lay by our arms all night for riot—all quiet."[66]

Adding to the fever pitch was the emphasis placed on weaponry. The papers had editorialized several times during the campaign that the city needed to purchase a rapid-fire gun for the general protection of the city, and articles proclaimed that "guns were still coming to North Carolina" in advance of the election. Adding to the fear of riot instilled in readers through their papers, Wilmington's editors simultaneously ran articles reporting that everyone in the city, black and white, was armed. The city's white businessmen acted, and, "at the cost of $1,200," they "purchased, equipped, and manned a rapid-fire gun" because "complete preparation would best assure protection." [67] Once the rapid-fire gun was

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mobilized by the governor on the day of the riot, the Citizen's Patrol ceased to exist because "there was no further need for their services." James Cowan, "The Wilmington Race Riot;" Jack Metts, November 9, 1898, Hinsdale Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

[64] It was decided by Democratic Party leaders that federal troops should not participate in activities because their involvement would possibly result in Federal intervention. Despite such warnings about participation, many members of the active troops participated in rallies and other activities, including the riot, wearing parts of their uniforms. Rountree, "Memorandum," *Minutes of the Association of the WLI*.

[65] *Wilmington Messenger,* November 5, 1898.

[66] Such quiet female support of the campaign can be found as an undercurrent in newspaper articles, parades, attendance at speeches and WGU events. Wootten Collection, University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

[67] John Bellamy testified that the purchase of a gun was done by the merchants for the protection of life and property "separate and apart" from the Democratic committees and that the purchase was "kept very quiet." *Wilmington Messenger*, November 4, 1898; Iredell Meares, "Wilmington Revolution" broadside, Edmund Smithwick and Family Papers, Private Collections, State Archives, Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; *Contested Election Case*, 256-7.